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Time and Self-Valorization Freedom from Work Through Work, an EJ Perspective on Work, Capital, and the Environment

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Time and Self-Valorization: Freedom from Work Through Work, an EJ Perspective on Work, Capital, and the Environment

By Gabriel R. Valle

Abstract

This paper explores the self-valorization of work in community gardens as freedom from work through work, which is a step towards environmental justice. Creating self-valorizing work requires us to reevaluate the value of time, which requires time to be placed outside of the market driven cult of speed. Community gardens are an act of sabotage against the system of capital because they are removing food as a commodity, and thus disrupting the circuits of exchange. In turn, community gardens are placing a new value on time that is not driven by capital accumulation and embraces bettering the quality of life.

When people have the opportunity to deconstruct capital's hegemony of time, communities can reconnect with work by creating self-valorizing work habits as individuals become more humane, thus, they rehumanize themselves. This has the opportunity to create self-valorizing communities, food systems, and environments. The Chicano community has a particular stake in the self-valorization of work because many are more susceptible to the conditions of work and the work place. Inequalities in the work place are reflected in unhealthy communities, economies, and environments. In this way, when individuals have the opportunity of self-valorization through their work they create natural wealth that reconstructs time, oppression, and communities and gives way to a human – human and human – nature relationship that is rooted in reciprocity. Place and place making then become the foundation of where environmental determinism is the seed of social interaction and participation.

Acknowledgements

This paper is a culmination of writing done throughout the 2011 Fall Quarter at the University of Washington, Seattle, in Anthropology 569 – Marx's *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. The paper derives from countless conversations, readings, and discussions with classmates and professors on the topics of autonomia, food sovereignty, environmental justice, work, and time.

Time and Self-Valorization: Freedom from Work Through Work, an EJ Perspective
on Work, Capital, and the Environment

Part I

The Self-Valorization of Slowness: Toward a New Use-Value of Time

“Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.”

-William Penn

Time and Value

For most of us, time is the measure of all things, including value. Our lives are structured out of this obscure object called time. It controls us by telling us when to eat, when to rest, when to work, and when to sleep. Yet, what good is it, really? According to Karl Marx and Harry Cleaver, time is a tool of oppression when it is used inside the capitalist mode of production. Looking through the lens of autonomous theory and the social factory, the oppression of time is just about everywhere. The Western notion of time has swept across the world consuming nations and people who embrace the capitalist agenda. For capital, time is everything; time is more than just money, it is the reproduction of money, which ultimately is more important than money itself.

Time is essential in the capitalist mode of production due to the circulation of capital. For capital to reach its ultimate goal, the time spent from production to money and back into production again (C-M-C), must reach zero. This goal is ultimately impossible to achieve, regardless, it is also the endless goal of capital. The ways in which capital hopes to achieve zero time is by manipulating time through the intensification of labor. The co-operation and the deskilling of workers followed by the advent of ‘dead labor’ gives capital the ability to increase the speed of production. Taylorism led to Fordism, which brought the assembly line to the

factory. Marx explains that for the capitalist, time "...must be expended with the average amount of exertion and the usual degree of intensity and the capitalist is careful to see that this is done, as he is to ensure that the workmen are not idle for a single moment."¹ Cleaver explains this further as he elaborates how the assembly line forced workers to not waste even the slightest movement because, "More labor time means less loss or more surplus value and so capital seeks by every means it can dream up to increase it."²

The working class has become slaves to time because they have become slaves to capital. For Marx, the objectified nature of the working class has rendered them paupers to the system of capital. In Chapter 9 of *Capital Volume I*, Marx demonstrates how capitalists use the rate of surplus value as to further exploit the worker. Within the hours of the working day there is never an equal exchange between objectified labor and labor time. Capitalism is based on getting something more than what you put into it, in other words, creating unpaid labor. However, regardless of what Professor Senior wants us to believe, this surplus value doesn't come in the final hour of work, rather, it comes in final *hours* of work. The advent of 'overtime' has further objectified the worker by increasing the hours of the working day. Though the capitalist has reset the wage, this again is not an equal exchange. "Capital tries to convince us that time is universal and just a physical entity. But we know it is not. One hour of work time is not equal to one hour of free time by any means."³ Therefore, capital increases pay for overtime to meet the perception that there is an equal exchange. Regardless, the more time spent in the factory or on the job, is more time objectified by the worker and more commodities produced for the employer.

¹ Karl Marx, *Capital Volume I* (New York: Penguin Classics 1990) 303.

² Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979) 120.

³ *Ibid* 120.

Our obsession with time has created an entire social system that is dependent on the enslavement of time. We structure our lives around TV schedules, soccer practice, the lunch bell, and the alarm clock. Our schedules have turned us into speed junkies continuously looking for an instant fix. The speed of our computers, cell phones, and cars govern our daily lives. Instant coffee, instant rice, and instant pudding are just a handful of ways our food production has embraced instant satisfaction. “Capital tries to shape all ‘leisure’, or free-time, activities – language, literature, art, music, television, news media, movies, theatres, museums, sports – in its own interests.”⁴ As Antonio Negri explained, new technology has the potential to set us free from our work and time, yet it appears it has only enslaved us all the more.

Towards Self-Valorizing Work

Labor-power has no use-value for capital unless it is used for the production of commodities. Since production is consumption, the accumulation of labor-power means the accumulation and production and commodities that can enter the circulation of exchange in order to be consumed by labor-power itself. Therefore, labor-power must enter the market of capital and produce labor-power in order to survive. But what if this wasn't the case? What if labor had a different use-value than solely the use-value of capital? In order for this to be accomplished, the individual would have to have a different understanding of the value of time.

The slow-city movement emerged in the midst of a wave of increased production in Italy in the 1990s. The movement was seen as a way to slow-down and to create a different way of seeing and interacting with the world and its people. Its goal was to create self-valorization among the people who practiced it. Waves of slow-city and slow-food groups have caught on

⁴ *Ibid* 123.

here in the states, yet they are clearly divided not only by race, but by economic class as well.

This is because free-time does not belong to the working class, but rather to capital.

“Any time spent by the working class that is not work – exactly the time workers fight to increase – is dead time for capital. For the working class, on the other hand, labour time is time lost. It is, after all, something it has been forced to sell to the capitalist; it belongs to the capitalist and is time lost to the worker. Thus, in contradiction to capital, labour time is dead time for the worker. It is only during nonwork time that the worker is free to live and develop his or her own life.”⁵

However, during those non-work times the worker is no longer generating income, and is thus, spending what he or she has worked for. This contradiction is essential to the understanding of how by simply slowing down we cannot reach self-valorization. This is because by simply slowing down, we are only creating the illusion of more time because these acts are not removing time from capital. In other words, they are simply restructuring time. The worker must make up for lost time as a result of ‘slowing down’ to enjoy life. According to Antonio Negri, in order to create true self-valorization we must destructure capital, which destroys its connection to time. “Class-valorization has nothing to do with the structuration of capital, but it has a lot to do with its deconstruction.”⁶ In other words, work must be placed outside of the capitalist mode of production in order to create self-valorizing work.

Antonio Negri explains that one of the faults of utopia, in both the socialist and communistic projects, was the misunderstanding of self-valorization.⁷ Utopian thinking believes that both capital and the individual can achieve self-valorization, but what utopian thinking is missing is that these are two antagonistic tendencies of capital. Capital self-valorizes when it exploits labor to create unpaid labor-time and the individual self-valorizes when it is freed from exploitation. In other words, utopia only restructures capital to mystify its malleability.

⁵ *Ibid* 120.

⁶ Antonio Negri, *Capitalist Domination and Working Class Sabotage*. Online 12, December 2011. <<http://libcom.org/library/capitalist-domination-working-class-sabotage-negri>>

⁷ *Ibid*

If utopia only clouds the restructuring of capital, and the slow-movements are a version of utopia, how can we create self-valorization? The answer is simple, yet complex at the same time. We must liberate work (labor) from the commodity form, thus disrupting the circuits of exchange-value. There are many ways to accomplish this, but first we must understand not only what binds us to capital, but also how we are bound to capital before we can attempt to remove it from the capitalist mode of production. Food and energy are the two commodities that place the working class at the submission of capital. Without one or the other of these two commodities we cannot survive. We must eat; therefore we must work in order to buy food to eat. We must consume energy, i.e. electricity, gas, water, oil, and therefore we must work in order to acquire these commodities. But what if we could remove one, or both, of these from circulation, in other words, remove it from the commodity form. Exchange-value and use-value are contradicting opposites for capital. A commodity only has a use-value for those who use it, but if it only has a use-value and no exchange-value, then it is not a commodity. One example of this is the community garden. In community food gardens residents are creating a space where food ceases to be a commodity because it is not integrated into the circulation of exchange. By removing food as a commodity members are producing food for use-value rather than exchange-value. This creates an environment where the self-production of food is the deconstruction of value.

Negri argues that acts of sabotage against the capitalist modes of production can be acts of self-valorization. The larger the number of people involved in the acts of sabotage, the more it creates 'dead-time' to capital and the more self-valorizing it can be. For Negri, these acts of sabotage are expressed in slowdowns, work-stoppages, strikes, etc. Sabotage is the struggle against the working day, which ultimately must be sped up or lengthened if capital is to feed its ever-growing hunger. In this case, sabotage is the freedom from work because the goal is to

create free time without work. But here, in the community garden, we have acts of collective sabotage against capital through work, work that is self-valorizing. In other words, we are moving from the self-valorization of *zerowork* to the self-valorization through work.

Community gardens are spaces where members of a community can gather to create the one thing that can't be rushed – food. At the same time, they are removing food as a commodity within the capitalist mode of production and disrupting it from the circulation. Community gardens are then acts of sabotage against capital because they are deconstructing not only the value of exchange, but also the value of labor. As a result, community gardens are representations of how capital is dependent on the worker, but the worker is not dependent on capital.

Now, there are contradictions and exceptions in the community gardens that must be dealt with. It is far too easy to remove community gardens as a space where hierarchies and conflicts do not arise. To romanticize about community gardens does little when presenting the garden as an alternative space to counter the capitalist production of food. Yet, what is important when discussing community gardens as an alternative to our current food system, is that within the garden there exists the opportunity to promote a just and sustainable space for food and cultural production. While this might not always be the case, what is always present is the opportunity for change.

According to the U.S. census, the average Hispanic family spends 15% of their yearly income on food.⁸ If a community garden can produce most of what a family or community needs to eat throughout the year, then a family or community can use that money on something different, or they can simply have more free time. These self-valorizing acts of individual

⁸ “Table 686. Average Annual Expenditures of All Consumer Units by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age of Householder: 2009,” U.S. Census 2012. Online 13, March 2012 <<http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0686.pdf>>

determinism create collective acts, which in turn create self-valorizing communities that are rooted through the connection to other members of the community. Autonomous acts of self and communal determinism can help to create sustainable places and communities where the possibilities are endless.

The benefits of the self-valorizing work in community gardens can be felt in more areas than solely economic. There are also countless environmental and health benefits as well. Many low-income communities that have created community gardens were once places of food deserts, only left with the substandard choices of fast food and convenience stores. Community gardens have brought a different value of food to many of these communities. The gardens have also been a display of cultural diversity. Each garden containing elements of different cultural backgrounds, ultimately this gets expressed into the community through the means of interaction.

In *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, Christian Marazzi, states that in order to counter the violence of financial capitalism we must reclaim time.

Taking time means giving each other the means of inventing one's own future, freeing it from the anxiety of immediate profit. It means caring for oneself and the environment in which one lives, it means growing up in a socially responsible way. To overcome this crisis without questioning the meaning of consumption, production, and investment is to reproduce the preconditions of financial capitalism, according to which "time is everything, man is nothing." For man to be everything, we need reclaim the time of his existence.⁹

Marazzi explains how a restructuration of time is only a restructuration of how capital hopes to further embed consumption, production, and investment. It is only through its destructure that we can reclaim time and the value of time.

"Today we must study how capital structures 'free time' so as to expand value."¹⁰

Therefore, we must understand how the restructuration of self-valorization only works to mystify

⁹ Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011) 96.

¹⁰ Cleaver, 122.

its connection to capital. If the universality of money is ultimately what guides our lives, and how we make money is structured by time, then we must make useful time in figuring out ways to destructure the authority of time. “Clocks have become tools of oppression within capital because minutes of labour time are gold for capital.”¹¹ For value, each minute of time spent outside of capital, is a minute earned towards the liberation of its influences. Time is whatever we make it.

Part II

From Zerowork to Self-Valorized Work: Closing the Metabolic Rift

“Being rich is having money; being wealthy is having time.”
-Margaret Bonnano

Reclaiming ‘Work’

For most of us, Capital has removed the value of work and replaced it with momentary, monetary happiness. As a result, we are far removed from the products we create. We are removed from our communities, from our environments, and from our own creativity. Marx believed that the human capacity for creativity was unequivocal, yet, because we have embraced the universality of money, we use our creativity for the accumulation of capital. We have material relations between people and social relations between things. We are overworked, underpaid, tired, and absent. The average person could care less about being connected to his or her production because they understand that we have to ‘work’ to make a living. This is true and fundamental. Work is essential for human survival. We are dependent on the food we grow or forage, we are reliant on the homes and communities we create, and we are bound to the

¹¹ Cleaver, 121.

relationships that take time to establish. And ultimately, all of these require some sort of work. But what is work and how are we connected to it? For Capital, work is production for the accumulation of capital. Life must be sped up and intensified to meet the ever-growing demands to maximize profit. For Capital, work is social control. But for work that resides outside of the capitalist mode of production, which does not produce a commodity, it is work that is an expression of life; it is experience and it is social. Therefore, how does work create the societies, communities, and environments in which we live?

Communities can reclaim work by creating avenues for self-valorized work that exists outside the capitalist mode of production when they are able to create a different understanding of the value of time. This new understanding of value is expressed in the communities in which we live, in the environments in which we interact with, and in the life in which we embrace. But how do we establish a new value for time? Linda Smith elaborates that decolonizing is about denormalizing;¹² if we are to create a new value for time, we must denormalize its significance in relation to our lives. For Capital, time must always be sped up or intensified, as a result of the social factory our daily lives are therefore sped up and intensified. Being slow is an insult, companies hire people based on their efficiency and productivity. Being fast is not only seen as a gift, but an attribute necessary for corporate survival. But in order to change that, we must act local. Acting local is against the cult of speed because it embraces place. Although this may not always be the case, this may be the essential starting place if we are to counter the value of speed. Acting locally means valuing local work. Local farmers markets may be a step in the right direction because they acknowledge the local, however, they miss the deep understanding of place. Just as Teresa Mares and Devon Peña explain, “Within food justice, it is simply not

¹² Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

enough to examine the ethics of going slow to go local. One has to go deep, and this means respecting local knowledge, wherever and whenever it is found.”¹³ It is local knowledge, therefore, that can teach us not only the value of time, but the value of work.

There are two ways to measure time, one for economy, and one for ecology. For economy, time is measured in seconds, minutes, and hours. To the worker it is the measurement of the accumulation of abstract minutes. At most, economy can extend its time frame to quarters or fiscal years, yet even these are broken down into months, weeks, days, and minutes. On the other hand, ecology is measured in cycles, seasons, and events. Ecology does not recognize quarterly reports, nor does it understand the need to meet a deadline. For ecology, time is about becoming and being, not as economy would have it, as repetition. This is Capital’s (mis)measurement of time. Capital cannot understand time outside of the capitalist mode of production because time outside the capitalist mode is ‘dead-time’. As a result, Capital has manipulated the ecological time of the natural environment by turning it into a commodity for production. For example, pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified food help to create the consistent production of food. Steroids in animals have allowed cows and chickens to grow at faster rates in order to maintain the agenda of production. The goal of Capital is to divide and conquer, to establish a consistent repetition of known events. As a result, most of what we know as the environment has been altered by the conquest of Capital. Through the globalization of food, Capital has altered the seasons to the extent that many of the youth today may never know the difference between seasonal fruits picked locally and off-season fruits picked globally.

¹³ Teresa Mares and Peña, Devon. "Environmental and Food Justice: Toward Local, Slow, and Deep Food Systems." *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Ed. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011) 201.

To understand ecological time we must have a great sense of place. It necessary to know and understand the seasons, what can be produced and when. Being rooted in place means knowing when the salmon return to spawn, when the birds migrate back, it means understanding the cycles of life and death, retreat and return. If we only understand quarterly reports, this profound understanding of place is impossible. When time exists outside the capitalist mode of production, it exists in its natural state, as a cycle. Inside the community garden, time is the seasonal cycle of food. It cannot be rushed and it cannot be globalized. Time, in the community garden, is time liberated from Capital; therefore, work in the community garden, which is liberated from the time of Capital accumulation, is liberated work. It thus becomes self-valorized work. Abraham Lincoln once said, "Labor is prior to, and independent of, Capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of Capital, and deserves much the high consideration."¹⁴ Therefore, when labor exists solely for the accumulation of Capital, labor exists as a pauper to Capital. But when labor exists independent from Capital, when it exists for the self-valorization of the worker, it becomes liberated work and is reclaimed by the worker.

Rationalizing a Future

When a choice comes to us, we attempt to figure out which path to take. What goes through our mind is a complex understanding of the consequences of this choice we are making. What are the benefits, side effects, and harms that can be done by this choice. Ultimately, what we have been taught by societal expectations is to choose the rational choice. In retrospect, what the choice usually entails is a cost-benefit analysis that equates to an economic rationality. According to cost-benefit theory, the benefits proposed must outweigh the cost or negative

¹⁴ <<http://front.moveon.org/the-best-abraham-lincoln-quote-about-labor/>>

externalities. In many instances, this can be explained when economic benefits are greater than its cost. If the environment is involved, economic benefits almost always outweigh the costs of environmental destruction because the environment is seen as expendable. Economic rationality is therefore based on maximum accumulation of Capital, in which case, it would be irrational to make a choice that wouldn't allow the maximum economic output. Because the rationality of the choice is based on a cost-benefit analysis it must be understood as; who is to benefit, and at what cost? As Marx points out, all capitalism requires some sort of unpaid labor. Therefore, this unpaid labor must be paid by the exploited, which is either the worker, or the environment. Economic rationality is always centered on the accumulation of capital because Capital can only see the monetary value of objects.

On the other hand, the often-neglected ecological rationality sees rationality as a complete and complex ecosystem. Ecological rationality is not reductionist, which simplifies everything down to monetary value, but rather, ecological rationality expresses the importance of all life. In short, the gap between economic and ecological rationality is the metabolic rift¹⁵ that maintains the division between humans and nature, explained by Marx as the division between town and country. People who live in “the town” base their understanding of the world on economic rationality. That means that their world is structured on a cost-benefit analysis of human-human and human-nature relationships. As a result, everything can be understood through a monetary value, including community. The metabolic rift, the human separation from the earth and soil has created the economic basis for human-nature interaction. Marx explained that humans and nature experience a metabolism that is not only the exchange of resources, but of knowledge and energy as well. According to John Bellamy Foster, “...the concept of social metabolism captured the complex interchange of matter and energy between human beings and

¹⁵ Marx, 1990.

nature.”¹⁶ For Marx, the land as a natural workshop is an expression of the metabolic exchange of energy between humans and the soil. Traditional knowledge explains the world through an ecological rationality. Again, it is not reductionist; rather, it is complex and must be embraced as such.

For many people, the difference between these two rationalities can be explained that one is seen as human centered, while the other is seen as nature centered. Accepting that there is something greater than the human individual is difficult, as a result, many have dismissed ecological rationality. For economic rationality, the human centered self is the ultimate measure of all things. Thus, the cost-benefit analysis is an analysis of just that; putting the self above all else to maximize individual capital gain over the gain of others. Ecological rationality, on the other hand, because it is not reductionist, is far more complex. John Bellamy Foster makes the argument that “We must find a way of putting people first in order to protect the environment.”¹⁷ Though I believe that people must be part of the discussion in concerns to the environment, I believe that the real problem is not the idea the people need to be centered in the environmental struggle, but rather, that humans need to understand that ecological rationality does not promote or relegate one species over another. The ideological concept of the metabolic rift is our self-made roadblock that refuses to understand the complexity of ecological rationality. Regardless, ecological rationality is always human centered because ecological rationality is governed by the ecological forces of nature. Ecological rationality refuses to separate humans from the environment and sees humans just as much a part of the ecosystem as any other species. Therefore, it is not about finding a way to put humans first in our

¹⁶ John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark, and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism’s War on the Earth*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010) 348.

¹⁷ John Bellamy-Foster, *Ecology Against Capitalism* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2002) 50.

environmental dialogue, but rather it is about creating an understanding of the ecological rationality, which places people within, and not separate from, the environment.

The Principles of Environmental Justice are expressions of this understanding. The Principles are centered on humans because ultimately it is our subjectivity as humans to understand our environment through our experiences. Regardless, the Principles do not place one form of nature above another. Because the Principles of Environmental Justice embrace life, they can be understood as inclusive to all life. Principle Number Five affirms the self- and environmental-determination of a people.¹⁸ Community gardens are an expression of how people have created community out of food. They are embracing an ecological rationality they express food for its use-value rather than its exchange-value. By removing food as a commodity members are nullifying Capital's economic rationality. What this leads to is Principle Number Seventeen, which requires communities to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles.¹⁹ When communities have the ability to express their own self- and environmental-determinism they have the ability to reprioritize the lives and communities through their own ecological rationalization.

Vandana Shiva, explains that, "The commons are the highest expression of economic democracy."²⁰ Through the community garden, residents are doing just that. Intimate participation is what creates meaning. When members of a community have the ability to

¹⁸ EJ principle #5: "Environmental Justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples."

¹⁹ EJ principle # 17: "Environmental Justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to ensure the health of the natural world for present and future generations."

²⁰ Vandana Shiva, *Eath Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005) 3.

participate, they are collectively creating a deep sense of place. “It is this deep connection with food that we must cultivate if food justice, as a movement, is destined to succeed.”²¹

Toward a Human Centered Environment

Communities that have the ability to create self-determined environments have the ability to establish their own concept of the commons. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the commons are an expression of life and a shared lived experience. “By ‘the common’ we mean, first of all, the common wealth of the material world – the air, the water, the fruits of the soil, and all nature’s bounty – which in classical European political texts is often claimed to be the inheritance of humanity as a whole, to be shared together.”²² A human centered environment is just that. It is the ecological understanding of everything that we share.

A human centered environment is not governed by economic rationality. Just as Marx believed, for Capital, money is the ultimate commodity, but through the reprioritization of community gardens, food ceases to be a commodity, and therefore, renders Capital superfluous. As Cleaver states, “Since capital is seen as social control through work and limited access to wealth (wage), the struggle is for less work and more access to wealth (money).”²³ But in the garden, it is not about less work and more money because that would only mystify our connection to Capital. It is not about the liberation from work, but rather, it is about the liberation of work from Capital. Self-valorized work inside the community garden is not governed by Capital’s authority of time and it does not understand economic rationality. What it does create, however, is self-determined communities that are bound together to challenge and

²¹ Mares and Peña, 214.

²² Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri, *Common Wealth* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009) viii.

²³ Cleaver, 160.

reprioritize the systems of social control. Enrique Leff makes that argument that; “Current environmental policies thus attempt to control some of the effects of the dominant production rationality without questioning this rationality itself.”²⁴ Because community gardens are removing food as a commodity, they are doing something that organic and sustainable agriculture are not, they are attempting to end the civil war between the capitalist and the working class because they are refusing to participate in Capital’s economic rationality.

Michael Taylor tells us that the land connects us to the past.²⁵ Regardless of whether the land is an ancient forest, agricultural field, or an urban center, the land is a representation of the past. Having a strong sense of place that is based on an ecological rationality is what connects us to a place. This allows us the ability to attain a deep understanding of place, which embraces an environmental ethic. Capital’s (mis)measurement of time is the metabolic rift that has separated town and country. Communities that engage in intimate participation through the commons are examples of what Hardt and Negri call the political concept of love.

“Love provides another path for investigating power and productivity of the common. Love is a means to escape the solitude of individualism but not, as contemporary ideology tells us, only to be isolated again in the private life of the couple or the family. To arrive at a political concept of love that recognizes it as centered on the production of the common and the production of social life, we have to break away from most of the contemporary meanings of the term by bringing back and working with some older notions.”²⁶

A human centered environment is one that embraces the Principles of Environmental Justice. Here, self-valORIZED work is liberated from the capitalist authority of time because it is centered on ecological rationality. However, this environment is not one that is constructed solely to

²⁴ Enrique Leff, *Green Production: Toward an Environmental Rationality* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995) 82.

²⁵ Michael Taylor, *Rationality and the Ideology of Disconnection* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁶ Hardt and Negri, xii.

better the present conditions of environmental degradation, but rather it is the profound understanding of the human responsibility to the intergenerational affects of time and space.

Part III

Chasing an Illusive Alternative

While life in the community garden may not be perfect, it does offer an opportunity for an alterative to our current life pattern of speed. Today's food system has resulted in the corperate takeover of our food chain. Globalization has replaced seasonal food patterns with a manipulated market that produces food at will for some, and the bare essentials for others. With constant repetition and growth, which were at one time the foundation of the global food system, industrial agriculture has been seen by some as reaching its ecological boundary. Ever since the green revolution peak yields in the 1970s and 1980s, the industrial food system has slowly produced less and less yields. Food sovereignty activist, such as La Vía Campesina, have sited over exploitation of the soil as a direct cause to the declining yields. For this reason, bringing the food system back to the local level may be a sustainable alternative.

While in this paper I have discussed that the community garden can be a tool for sabotage against capitalist mode of production, I also understand that the community garden has its limits. For example, it is still evident today that wealthy communities have more access to urban gardens and thus, separate gardens on bases of social and economic class. While this separation does little to confront the commodification of food, it does extend the dialogue of our food systems. As I have demonstrated, the slow food and slow city movements are only a restructuration of time. It is utopian to believe that these movements provide opportunities for all people; the same could be said of community gardens. While it may be difficult to move

beyond the preconceived notions that farm work is self-exploitation, it is essential to also understand that life requires work in all shapes and forms. Community gardens are just as much about growing food as they are about growing relationships, and it is in these relationships that create the foundation of community. Gardens can be used as a tool for social scaffolding where members learn to depend and rely on one another. Again, it is too easy to get over romantic about the notions of community because corruption and exploitation can still arise. Yet, what I propose is that community gardens, as a space or as a place, have the opportunity to create self-determined environments, communities, and individuals that promote a better quality of life.

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